

Noyes (I.P.)

J. Miles Browne,
[1831-1894]

[Obituary: by I.P.
Noyes.]

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the Haram-es-Shereef, known as the gate of the Chain (Bab-el-Silsileh), the explorers came upon a series of vaults which appear at one time to have served as secret store chambers. The remains of a secret passage leading to the temple were also found close by. In one of the passages of this series of vaults, an opening was discovered leading into a very ancient vault, which the explorers appropriately named the Masonic Hall. The following is Sir Charles Warren's description of it, extracted from his book, "The Recovery of Jerusalem:"

"The entrance opens down to it from the north, the floor of the little passage

SORROW, SORROW, SORROW.

Dr. John Mills Browne, 33d, Treasurer-General, Supreme Council—A. A. S., Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, U. S. A.

Again the Supreme Council mourns the loss of a very prominent member.

For the benefit of those who knew him when he resided in California, it may, at the start, be well to refer to the style of his name, by which of late years he was so familiarly known—J. Mills Browne. Prior to the time of his coming to Washington, about 1878, he signed his name "John M. Browne," and by this form of name he was then known to the public. But on coming to Washington, like many other men, he began to have trouble with his mail. He discovered that the name of "John M. Browne" was not patent to himself. He was constantly getting other people's mail, and they evidently getting his. So he adopted the form of name whereby in his later years he was so well known. He, though, was the same genial man and brother whom the friends in California knew by the more plain form of "John M. Browne." Changing the form of his name did not change the man. Those who knew him while so many years on the Pacific coast, would readily have recognized him as the same warm-hearted brother and courteous man of the world.

Dr. Browne was of sterling New Hampshire stock. He was born May 10th, 1831, at Hinsdale, N. H. He graduated in medicine from Harvard in 1852.

Only a week or two before his death I received a kind note from him wherein he referred to Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes as his preceptor. He wrote "the fortune was mine to have Dr. Holmes in anatomy and physiology in my medical student life, and as dean of the faculty when I became a doctor in medicine. I remember him with affectionate gratitude for his kindness and teaching; and I now mourn the death of my good friend and worthy teacher in my happy youthful days."

This was his tribute to Dr. Holmes. Little did we then think that his own death was so near, for we had met him but a short time ago, and he was looking finely. And when his health was referred to he very happily remarked that he never felt better in his life. He had given up tea and coffee, as he had found that they did not agree with him. He ate very little, was moderate in his diet, eschewed all strong drink, and gave up the use of tobacco; and said he felt better for it. At banquets, when

all around him were eating and drinking, I have seen him simply play with a little plain food; and perhaps, for form's sake, eat a little, but not heartily, nor of rich food would he on these occasions partake. At 63 he was, to all appearances, a well preserved man, seemed to enjoy good health, was certainly in good spirits, and had the appearance of being, for his years, in the best of health. With all this the swift messenger of death appeared before him; but he found him ready. The sudden call never catches, unprepared, such a man as was Dr. Browne.

"He long had lived an honest life,
Kind to his neighbors and his wife."

He was a good Mason and a most intelligent and cultivated brother, who took great interest in the Order. While in California he advanced until he became Grand Master of the State, and as Past Grand Master of California he was often introduced at Masonic gatherings here in Washington. In the capitular degrees he became Grand High Priest. Thus the York rite honored the worthy brother.

In July, 1876, he was made an honorary 33d of the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scotch Rite, and October 20th, 1880, he was crowned an active member. October, 1886, he was made Treasurer General of the Supreme Council. In addition to this he served many years as "Inspector General" of the District of Columbia. And thus the Scotch Rite honored him. As to his distinguished honors in other lines, in the medical profession, in the Loyal Legion, the Royal Order of Scotland, and the various other organizations of which he was a member, I leave that to others more familiar with him in those lines. They all will have something to say in regard to him, and in him all will find a most worthy subject.

Although a death is sometimes apparently sudden, still when we come to know all the facts, it is not so sudden after all. It seems that Dr. Browne had a severe attack a year or more ago, and his more intimate friends seem to think that, while he looked well in the face, that he never fully recovered from that attack. The energy of the man had abated; still they were happy to see him looking so well, and they thought that many quiet and pleasant years were in store for him. But it seems not. Monday, December 3, he visited the Senate chamber, and while there the old difficulty returned, though not very severe. He rallied from this, returned to his home and rested, and by Tuesday night, Decem-

(Over)

ber 4th, I understand, went out to some evening party and did not appear to be any the worse for the little attack the day before at the Senate chamber. But that night, or early the next morning, the attack was renewed, and from that hour he never rallied. The right side was paralyzed. He lingered until 8:30 p. m., December 7th, when he yielded up the happy spirit that had so long dwelt within his manly person.

Dr. Browne was a most genial man; a man who disliked trouble and discord, and yet back of this was a moral character that caused him to take a positive stand whenever the occasion demanded. He was of sterling New England stock, and while quiet in his manner he was sturdy in his character. He admired manliness in his fellow-men. He was a very polite and gentlemanly man, and this was the secret of his success in society, where he was received with open arms. Few men have proved a greater success than he in this line, and yet back of all this polish there was a rugged manliness that kept him well to the windward of all snobbishness and sham.

There was nothing about him that partook of the morbid sensational, or morbid approbativeness in style. In dress he was the plain, quiet gentleman; every act and movement revealed the gentleman.

There was no effort to produce any sensational effect. Nature had given him an easy manner, and his associations with the many men of polish and culture that he met evidently only added to his natural gifts. Dr. Browne was a polished gentleman and manly man. Fortune seemed to smile upon him in some things, and yet he had his rough rows to hoe as well as other people.

At the age of 62 the rules of the Navy Department required him to retire. He was fortunate enough to be able to retire with the rank of a commodore. When his time for retirement came he felt much relieved. The official cares he readily dropped. Nothing seemed to give him greater pleasure than to look forward to a few years of rest, free from all official care. He did not want to be hampered by any office, the work of which would exact any of his time, for the rest of his life he wanted to be free to go and come where he pleased. In this respect he was fortunate, and yet this good fortune was not all luck, but the result of many years of close application to the duties and requirements of life.

Dr. Browne had many friends and

few enemies. That he had any enemies, I do not know; that he had a host of friends, I do know. He had that happy disposition that made many many friends and made at least a minimum of enemies; but few men had less of this element about him than he.

He was honored by the Navy Department which he served so many years. He was one of the very close and dear friends of the Ill. and honored Brother Albert Pike; and as a Mason of the York and Scottish Rites, he was highly honored, and one reason for this was evidently his continued interest in the Order. Many an evening he visited the Cathedral of the Rite and took an active part in the working of the degrees; even apart from his high rank, adding much dignity to the sublime work of the Order.

While a surgeon in the Navy much of his service was on the Pacific coast. He superintended the erection of the Naval Hospital at Mare Island, and was in charge until 1871, when he served as fleet surgeon of the North Pacific squadron. During the war he was surgeon on board the Kearsage, and a number of times before the different Masonic bodies has he spoken on the subject of the memorable fight between the Kearsarge and Alabama.

He represented the United States Navy at the International Medical Congress, held in London in 1881, and again in 1884 in the same capacity attended the International Congress at Copenhagen. On these occasions his high Masonic rank gave him a prestige with the Fraternity abroad. As it were, double honors were paid him—that of being a member of the High Commission and that of being a prominent and active member of the Supreme Council.

With high honors he left us. He could not, however, bequeath these honors to others. They must win them as he won them, and whoever attains unto them may they wear them as well as they were worn by him; and may they not be exalted by such honors any more than was he. In these things may they follow his good example—modest in all grades of life through which he passed.

His service in the war entitled him to be buried at Arlington, and there, on the 11th of December, 1894, it is proposed to deposit the body that in life belonged to our Ill. Brother John Mills Browne, 33d, Treasurer-General of the Supreme Council, A. A. S. R., Southern Jurisdiction, U. S. A.

Our Ill Brother Browne was a very

pleasant speaker. He often entertained the brethren at Lodge and Chapter visitations. He was also a very happy after-dinner speaker. His style was quiet, impressive, deliberate, and yet, like himself in other departments, manly.

In worldly rank he was the peer of the highest; but towards all—towards the lower in social rank, as well as towards the higher, he was the kind and genial gentleman. With pleasure we shall long remember him. May his soul progress in peace.

ISAAC P. NOYES.
Washington, D. C., Dec. 8, 1894.

